

Paradise Lost

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Last weekend I went out with my brothers. We only see each other once or twice a year. However, it is difficult to get off the beaten path. If certain roles have arisen in our interactions with each other, it is difficult for us to see and meet each other and ourselves outside the deep-rooted role patterns. The unpleasantness that has emerged in our actions and thoughts prove difficult to break, time after time. They have been woven through our histories. When we no longer experience the best version of ourselves (or the other) in these deep-rooted patterns, relationships can ultimately be broken. Often this happens quite suddenly, like a drop that makes the bucket overflow.

At the individual level we also know that it can be very difficult to unlearn bad habits. For example, a once learned but non-optimal fingering on the piano is almost impossible to unlearn. The problem, as Dickens describes so beautifully in his famous *Christmas Carol*, is that we indeed make the chain we forge in life link by link. Again, certain habits and addictions are sometimes so difficult to leave behind. The force of habit.

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Brain rule number 1 - the Hebbian rule - says Cells that fire together wire together. And what applies to cells in our brain also applies to "aggregated" levels: people who join together form each other. Brothers and sisters are wonderful examples of units (systems) that form each other; during the important first two decades their lives and development are often closely intertwined.

When I look at my brothers, I see that we are very different, but more than before, I also see many similarities between us. Brothers and sisters are probably inclined to exaggerate the differences between them. In systems of more or less equal elements, individuality is essential, because otherwise the system could deal badly with new situations, it would lead to passivity and stagnation (inertia). Brothers and sisters develop their own characteristic roles that form the basis of individuality or personality. Nature would not have invented individuality if it was not an absolute necessity of life!

With my brothers we continued in our grandfathers footsteps, by making a trip on a Solex (bicycle with auxiliary engine). It is precisely because we ceased to form each other at a very young age because of the divorce of our parents that the

patterns are still very deep and unpolished. Tucked away deeply, the memories of our lost paradise came back, as well as the roles we started to fulfill there: the loyal, the daring, the bridge builder, the deviant, and so on, and so on.

The Solex can easily drive 50 miles on just one litre of petrol. It does not go fast, but we arrive at all marked places: coffee, lunch, tea, and dinner. Our grandfathers had much less comfort and less money, but still more nature. The power of habit also has a global grip on man. More comfort, for less and less money, against ever higher taxes on the planet. Separated by a distance of many years, I now see that my brothers and I look more alike than we thought. Slightly moved I look at my brothers and behold fragments of our lost paradise. For a moment we are the children we once were. And here is the fear of losing it all. Our paradise needs protection; we can not continue our burden on the planet.

I wish you all a very happy holiday!